National Aeronautics and Space Administration

the Space Place

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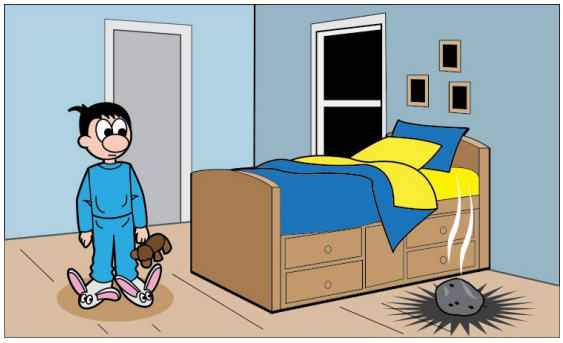
NEWS AND NOTES FOR FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATORS

The Space Place is a NASA website for elementary school-aged kids, their teachers, and their parents.

It's colorful!
It's dynamic!
It's fun!
It's rich with science, technology, engineering, and math content!
It's informal.
It's meaty.
It's easy to read and understand.
It's also in Spanish.
And it's free!

It has over 160 separate modules for kids, including hands-on projects, interactive games, animated cartoons, and amazing facts about space and Earth science and technology.

*The National Science Teachers' Association has recently published the Next Generation Science Standards. From the NSTA website, these K-12 standards "**. . . establish learning expectations for students that integrate three important dimensions—science and engineering practices, disciplinary core ideas, and crosscutting concepts . . .**" After reviewing these new standards carefully, we have found that many of the modules on The Space Place website support one or more. Stay tuned for a helpful index page that will allow you to search for Space Place content by each of the three dimensions in the NGSS.*



What's new?

Kids end up with their own wacky, loopy stories in our new "Loopy Legends" activity. As with "Mad-Libs," they fill in requested words with whatever they can imagine. Then, their words are folded into a story about an interesting science-related event. For example, a meteor falls through a boy's roof and lands on his bedroom floor in the middle of the night . . . or some loopy variation thereof. The student's version of the story is followed by a short explanation of the science. Earth science and physical science (astronomy and heliophysics) topics are included. Check it out at spaceplace.nasa.gov/loopy-legends.

Spotlight on The Space Place Calendar

Have you discovered The Space Place Calendar? It's at spaceplace.nasa.gov/calendar. Each month is its own page, with a beautiful space- or Earth-related image. The images, plus 10 or 12 "special days" for each month are highlighted with links to relevant pages on the website. It is a valuable resource to help you make connections with history, science, and just plain silliness, in some cases. For example, September 5 is "National Cheese Pizza Day." That means you can use the round cardboard from the take-out pizza to make our beautiful Galactic Mobile. Other real-life events may connect with science articles. September 22 is the Autumnal Equinox. What does that mean? What causes the seasons, anyway? That date links to spaceplace.nasa.gov/seasons.

Spotlight on cool subjects—birds and radar

As the Sun sets in late Fall, migratory birds all across North America take to the skies for a long journey. Direct your students to the latest Space Place article so they can find out how NASA radar helps scientists better understand these birds' travels. When they are done, be sure they check out our fun new hands-on activity—make your own bird-feeder wreath! Kids can use their bird feeders to see what birds are in their neighborhood. Check it out at spaceplace.nasa.gov/birds.

For out-of-school time

Board games are in. Of course, so are video games. What we have, though, is a hybrid of the best of both, plus it's educational! The Wild Weather Adventure game is an online board game for 1 to 4 players. If there's only one player, the computer is the opponent, its skill level selectable. Two or more players take turns, as in any other board game. There are playing pieces (Research ships with different colors and names), a spinner (in lieu of dice), a map of the world for a playing "surface," and blocks and boosts along the way. To advance, players must answer weather and Earth science related multiple choice questions. They can choose whether their question will be easy, medium, or hard. Of course, right answers to harder questions are rewarded proportionally. Decision points present unknown risks and rewards. Check it out at spaceplace.nasa.gov/wild-weather-adventure.

Make these days special

September 6: Read a Book Day.
There are several fun books on the Space Place at spaceplace.nasa.gov/menu/storybook/.

September 11: Make Your Bed Day.
Ask students, "How would your bed look through an infrared camera if you had just gotten out of it?" The Infrared Photo Album will give a clue. spaceplace.nasa.gov/ir-photo-album.

September 23, 1846: Neptune discovered.
Students can find Neptune's place in the solar system and play mini-games with the planets at the Solar System Explorer, spaceplace.nasa.gov/solar-system-explorer.

October 1-31: Computer Learning Month.
Introduce the simple on/off language of computers at spaceplace.nasa.gov/binary-code2.

October 4, 1957: Sputnik, the first satellite, was launched by the Soviet Union.
All sputnik did was beep! Show your students what satellites can do now by directing them to the Missions to Planet Earth Card Game at spaceplace.nasa.gov/earth-card-game.

October 21: Orionids Meteor Shower.
Check out spaceplace.nasa.gov/meteor-shower. Then look for "shooting stars" in the part of the sky near constellation Orion the Hunter.

A personal note...

As webmaster and writer of The Space Place for 14 years (and 30 years at NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab), it was with mixed feelings that I retired this summer. Being part of this creative team has been challenging, grueling, and more fun than any job I could have ever imagined for my English major self. It has been a joy to create resources intended to help students and educators to enrich their experience and, I hope, make learning more fun.

Our new writer and webmaster is Alex Kasprak, a young man with glowing credentials, great new ideas, and a lot of enthusiasm. He will bring his own unique touch to The Space Place.

We wish you a wonderful year, and remember to smile and laugh.

Diane K. Fisher